

## A DAY WITH WASHINGTON IRVING.

(FROM A LETTER TO A FRIEND, WRITTEN SHORTLY BEFORE THE LAST MAIL FROM AMERICA BROUGHT TO ENGLAND THE NEWS OF WASHINGTON IRVING'S DEATH.)

WASHINGTON IRVING had been the lion of the metropolis for more than a week, and it had been my rare good fortune to see much of him. He came here for the purpose of examining the Washington papers in the department of state, and he was the guest of his friend, the Honourable John P. Kennedy. My official position in the department had made it my duty to treat him with attention there; I met him also in company, and had a long talk with him in my quiet little library; and was his guide and companion in a visit to Arlington.\* That my head should therefore have

been full of ideas gathered from his delightful conversation was quite natural, and the fact that he once wrote to a friend a personal letter about Sir Walter Scott would seem to sanction my recording them for your gratification; and, according to my promise, therefore, I send you a few paragraphs bearing upon his own private habits and opinions. The title of his essay was "Abbotsford," and the subject of mine shall be "A day with Washington Irving," for I pro-

a relative of George Washington, and the inheritor of many valuable household gods from that distinguished American. Since the visit herein described was made, Mr. Custis has died, leaving a "Private Life of Washington."

\* Arlington was the residence of Mr. George W. P. Custis,

mise to confine myself in this letter to what I obtained while on our visit to Arlington.

Hardly had our carriage ceased rattling over the stony streets and reached the Long Bridge across the Potomac, before his conversation became so interesting that I involuntarily seized my notebook. At this *professional* movement he smiled, and as he did not demur, I proceeded to question him in regard to his literary career and other kindred matters, the substance of his replies being as follows:—

William Jerdan, of the London "Literary Gazette," was one of his earliest and best friends. He was the first to republish some of the stray papers of the Sketch Book—and, if you will pardon my egotism, I would here fix the fact, that the first and several of the most friendly reviews ever published in England, of my own poor productions, were written by the same distinguished critic. At the time alluded to, Mr. Irving was afloat in the world, and depended upon his pen for a living. After several of the essays had appeared in the "Gazette," the editor recommended that the whole collection should be printed in a book, and this, after some delay, was accomplished. The book was offered to John Murray, but was declined. Walter Scott recommended it to Archibald Constable, of Edinburgh, and he was ready to take it; but, in the mean time, Mr. Irving had it published upon his own venture. That effort proved a failure; but the work was subsequently successful, with the imprint upon it of John Murray.

At this success no man was more astonished than himself; and when an American critic spoke of the story of "Rip Van Winkle" as a futile attempt at humour, he said he was more than half willing to believe his judgment correct. Indifference to censure and applause had never been, and was not then, a trait in his character.

On questioning Mr. Irving, in regard to "Knickerbocker's History of New York," he told me that it had cost him more hard work than any other of his productions, though he considered it decidedly the most original. He was often greatly perplexed to fix the boundary between the purely historical and the imaginative. The facts of history had given him great trouble.

As to his "Life of Washington," which had been so long expected by the public, and which was announced contrary to his wishes, and had given him great annoyance, he said, he hardly believed he would ever send it to press. He loved the subject, and thought first of writing such a work twenty years before. But so many able men had written upon it, he did not believe he could say anything new. Many had told him he ought to write it; but why should he? Ten years ago he had the work all written in chapters, up to the inauguration of Washington as President, and he could finish it then in a few days. But he did not like it—it did not suit him; and he expected to put it in the fire some of these days. He ought to have commenced it forty years ago. All that he could hope to do that was new, was to weave into his narrative what incidents he could obtain of a private and personal character. He supposed that some people thought him very foolish to be writing

any book at his time of life; that he was then seventy years old; but the subject was intensely interesting to him, and he wished to write it for his own gratification. He might not live to complete it, but he would try what he could do; he must do something—he could not be idle.\*

With regard to the Washington Papers in the Department of State, he said, he had found very little in them worth printing which had not already been published.

Mr. Irving's main object in visiting Arlington was to gather items of personal information about Washington. Mount Vernon he was already familiar with, and counting much upon an interview with Mr. Custis, he was not disappointed. Mr. Custis seemed to love and admire with intensity the name and character of Washington; he looked upon him as a special gift from God to his country, and did not hear our great author speak of our great General without emotion. He said that every American should be proud of the memory of Washington, and should make his example and his wonderful character a continual study.

Our common friend of Arlington House, with his wife, received Mr. Irving with every manifestation of regard, and after the true open-handed and open-hearted Virginia fashion. The pictures, the books, and the furniture—relics of Mount Vernon—were all exhibited; and it seemed to me that Mr. Custis was particularly happy in expressing his "recollections of the chief," which you remember is a pet phrase with our friend. But Mr. Irving had himself seen General Washington. He said there was some celebration going on in New York, and the General was there to participate in the ceremony. "My nurse," continued Mr. Irving, "a good old Scotchwoman, was very anxious for me to see him, and held me up in her arms as he rode past. This, however, did not satisfy her. So the next day, when walking with me in Broadway, she espied him in a shop; she seized my hand, and darting in, exclaimed, in her bland Scotch, 'Please, your Excellency, here's a bairn that's called after ye!' General Washington then turned his benevolent face full upon me, smiled, laid his hand upon my head, and gave me his blessing, which," added Mr. Irving, earnestly, "I have reason to believe has attended me through life. I was but five years old, yet I can feel that hand even now!"

Of all the reminiscences which Mr. Irving brought from Arlington House the most agreeable was, that he had noticed a striking resemblance between Mrs. Custis and his own mother. The latter had been dead nearly forty years, and he had been a very extensive traveller, but he had never seen a face towards which his heart seemed to yearn so strongly. I noticed the fact that he could hardly keep his eyes off of her, and he thought proper to apologise for his apparent rudeness by alluding to the emotions which her presence excited in his breast. He subsequently accounted to me for the resemblance by analyzing the peculiar expression of the eyes, caused by unusually long eyelashes, all of which seemed to be confirmed in my opinion by the dreamy

\* The first volume of the "Life of Washington" was published in 1855, and the fifth and last in 1859.



expression of his own eyes. From the tone of his conversation it was apparent that his admiration for a true woman was unbounded. He said that he never tired of looking at them. It had always been his custom in travelling over the world to take particular notice of the women whom he met (especially if they were beautiful), and to amuse himself by composing stories, purely imaginary of course, in which they conspicuously figured.

When questioned as to his manner of writing, Mr. Irving gave me the following particulars: He usually wrote with great rapidity. Some of the most popular passages in his books were written with the greatest ease, and the more uninteresting ones were those which had cost him the most trouble. At one time he had to labour very hard to bring up one part of an essay to the level of another. He never allowed a thing to go to press, however, without writing it or overlooking it a second time; he was always careful about that. Several of the papers in the Sketch Book were written before breakfast; one he remembered especially—"The Wife." At one time, in England, Thomas Moore called upon him when deeply engaged in writing a story, and as the poet saw page after page of Mr. Irving's manuscript thrown aside, he stepped quietly into the room, and did not speak a word until the task was ended, when he said it would have been a pity to have disturbed a man under such circumstances. The first things he ever printed were school compositions, which he was in the habit of sending to the "Weekly Museum," a little quarto journal published in New York, when he was a boy twelve or fourteen years old. Many papers that he sent to the printer were rejected, but those assaults upon his pride did not make him unhappy. At no period of his life had he ever attempted to make a grand sentence; his chief object had been to utter his thoughts in the fewest possible words, as simple and plain as language would allow. The only poetry he had ever attempted was a piece entitled, "Lines to the Passaic." These verses were written in an album for the amusement of a party of ladies and gentlemen, which he had joined, to the Falls. He said they ought never to have been printed, for in his opinion they were very poor, very poor stuff. In 1802, when nineteen years of age, he published in a paper called "The Chronicle," edited by his brother, a series of letters with the signature of Jonathan Old Style—but these productions he never recognised. In consequence of ill health, he went to Europe in 1804, and after his return to New York, in 1807, he took the chief part in "Salmagundi." "Knickerbocker's New York" was published in 1809, and in 1813 he edited the "Analectic Magazine," at which time he became an aide-de-camp and was called Colonel Irving. The years in which his succeeding books made their appearance, as near as he could remember, were as follow: "The Sketch Book," in 1818; "Bracebridge Hall," in 1822; "Tales of a Traveller," in 1824; "Columbus," in 1828; "Conquest of Granada," in 1829; "Alhambra," in 1832; "Crayon Miscellany," in 1835; "Astoria," in 1836; "Bonneville's Adventures," in 1837; "Oliver Goldsmith," in 1849;

and "Mahomet," in 1850. The University of Oxford made him a D.C.L. in 1831, when he was Secretary of Legation in London, and the date of his appointment as Minister to Spain was 1842, the same having been conferred without his solicitation. The fifty guinea gold medal conferred upon him by George IV. was for historical composition, and the person who received the other medal of the same year (1831) was Henry Hallam.

He touched upon literary men generally, and upon certain living English writers. He said of — \* \* \*

On looking at a picturesque group of children by the way-side, he was reminded of Wilkie. He knew the painter well. Returning from Italy, Wilkie had heard of his being in Spain, and went all the way from Madrid to spend a couple of months or more. He spoke of the artist as an honest blunt man and a capital painter; but in a few of his Spanish pictures he had committed the error of introducing Scotch accessories. When in Madrid they walked a great deal together, went into all sorts of places, and the painter was constantly taking sketches. "On one occasion," said Mr. Irving, "when my attention had been attracted by a gaudily dressed group of soldiers and women, I turned to him and said, 'There, Wilkie, there's something very fine!' He looked attentively for a moment, and shaking his head, hastily replied, 'Too costumeey, too costumeey.' The fact was, he delighted more in the rich brown of old rags than he did in the bright colours of new lace and new cloth."

Speaking to Mr. Irving of a headache with which I was suffering, he remarked, that was a thing he had never experienced. Indeed, he thought that no man had ever lived so long a life as he had, with fewer aches and pains. He mentioned the singular fact that for a period of twenty years, from 1822 to 1842, he had not been conscious of the least bodily suffering. A good dinner was a thing that he had always enjoyed, but he liked it plain and well cooked. In early life he was very fond of walking; but owing to a cutaneous affection which came upon him in Spain, his ankles were somewhat weakened, and he had since that time taken the most of his exercise on horseback. This last remark was made in reply to the surprise which Mr. Custis expressed at seeing him skip up a flight of stairs three steps at a time, and for which he apologised, by saying that he frequently forgot himself. While alluding to his habits, he remarked that a quiet, sedentary life agreed with him, and that he often sat at his writing-table, when at work, from four to six hours without ever rising from his chair. He also avowed himself a great lover of sleep. When at home, he always took a nap after dinner, but somehow of late years he could not sleep well at night; he frequently spent more than half the night wakeful, and at such times he was in the habit of reading a great deal. He said that he really envied the man who could sleep soundly.

I had a short talk with Mr. Irving about the copyright treaty which was drawn up by Messrs. Webster and Crampton, and then in the hands of Mr. Everett. He did not believe it would be ratified by the senate, and spoke in rather severe

terms of the want of intelligence, on purely literary matters, in that distinguished body, and also of the conduct of certain publishers who were doing all they could to prevent the ratification of the treaty.

An incident related by Mr. Irving, tending to illustrate the character of Andrew Jackson, was to this effect: "When Secretary of Legation at St. James's, in 1831, he was left by Mr. M'Lane to represent the country in the capacity of *Chargé d'Affaires* for a period of three months. During that time the coronation of William the Fourth took place, and his expenses were unusually heavy. When he came home he presented a claim for 100*l.*, which was a smaller sum than he had expended. The President said there was no law providing for such claims, but ordered that he should receive the pay of a *Chargé* for the time employed. And he did receive it—a sum amounting to more than twice what had been prayed for."

But enough. Though not afraid to tire you with pleasant reminiscences of a man universally honoured and beloved, yet my selfishness and modesty prompt me to reserve a portion of my notes of Mr. Irving's conversation for my special gratification. A few of his statements bearing upon the truth of history I may give you on some future occasion.

CHARLES LANMAN (U.S.)

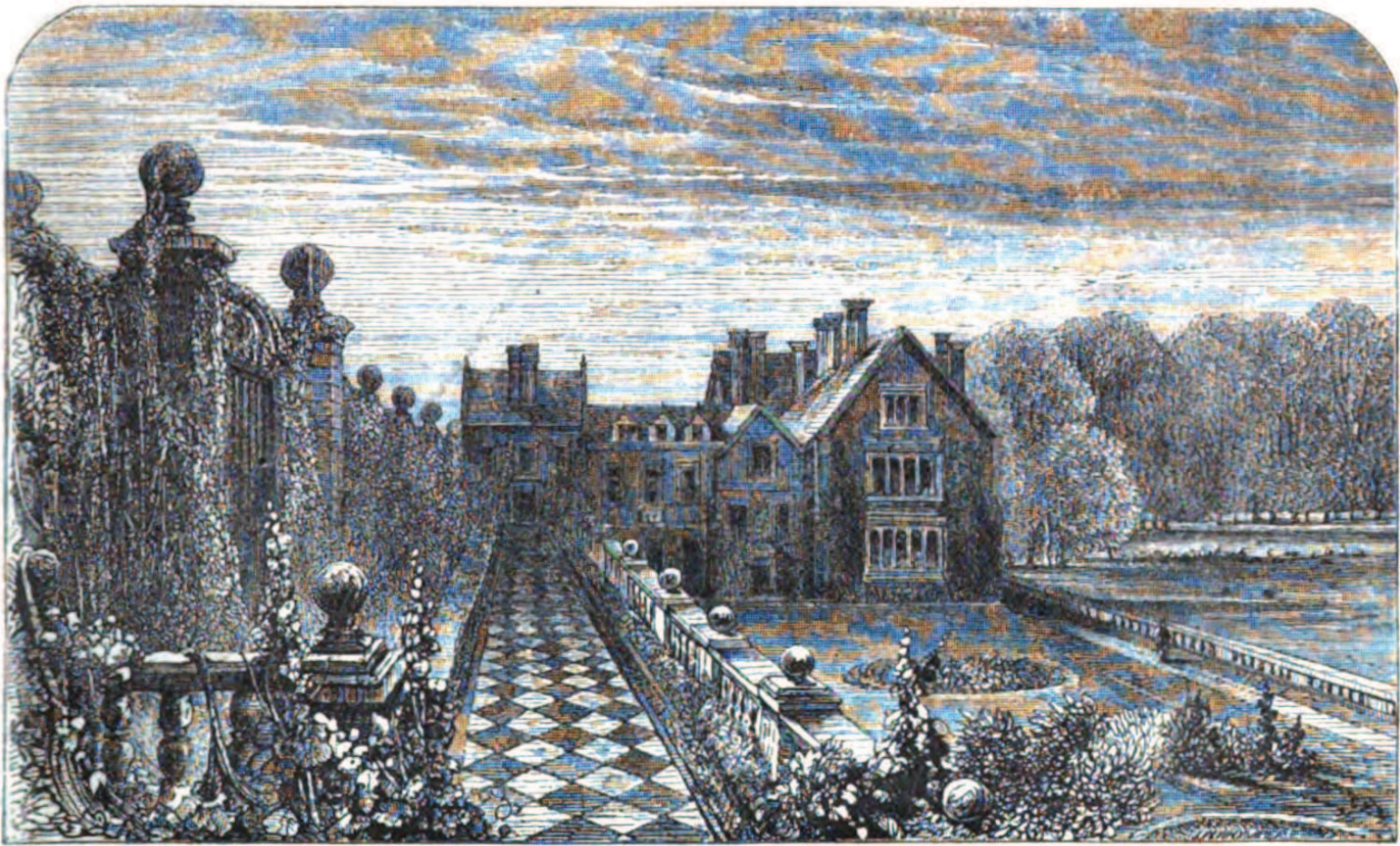


## AGES OF SOME LIVING ENGLISH WRITERS.

JAMES HANNAY, 32; Julia Kavanagh, 35; Matthew Arnold, 35; Florence Nightingale, 36; Rev. C. Kingsley, 40; Captain Mayne Reid, 41; G. H. Lewes, 42; Tom Taylor, 42; Shirley Brooks, 43; Albert Smith, 43; William Howard Russell, 43; Professor Aytoun, 46; R. Browning, 47; C. Mackay, 47; C. Dickens, 47; W. M. Thackeray, 48; A. Tennyson, 49; Fanny Kemble, 49; Sir Archibald Alison, 49; Mark Lemon, 50; Edward Miall, 50; R. M. Milnes, 50; W. E. Gladstone, 50; Hon. Mrs. Norton, 51; Charles Lever, 53; Professor Maurice, 54; Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, 54; Benjamin Disraeli, 54; Harrison Ainsworth, 54; Mary Howitt, 55; H. Martineau, 57; Mrs. Gore, 59; S. C. Hall, 59; Mrs. Marsh, 60; Barry Cornwall, 60; Samuel Lover, 61; Albany Fonblanque, 62; Rev. G. R. Gleig, 63; T. Carlyle, 64; W. Howitt, 64; Sir John Bowring, 67; Rev. H. H. Milman, 68; J. P. Collier, 70; Frances Trollope, 72; W. J. Fox, 73; Sir W. Napier, 74; Rev. Dr. Croly, 74; Lord Brougham, 81; and Walter Savage Landor 84.



## THE HOME AND GRAVE OF BYRON.



ON the highway-side from Mansfield to Nottingham, some four miles from the former place, stands an oak of such remarkable growth that attention is arrested by the beauty of its form and the extent of its branches. It partially overshadows the road, and stretching back its long arms to meet the trees on either side of it, overhangs with a mass of thick foliage a park-gate of unpretending appearance. This is the entrance to the romantic domain of Newstead. There is no lodge—no guardian at the gate, save this noble tree.

Lord George Gordon Byron, the poet, was only six years old when he succeeded to this property, and Moore mentions the delight with which he was here received by some of the tenantry, accompanied by his mother, on their journey from Aberdeen. It was in 1808 that these gates were afterwards thrown open to receive him as the owner and resident of Newstead, which had been occupied, during his minority, by Lord Grey de Ruthyn.

The original carriage-road to the abbey is nearly effaced, and the broad glade is intersected by the tracks of timber-carts. On the occasion of our visit, the rain of the preceding night had filled the turf ruts and washed the sandy road into furrows, while the oppressive heat of the morning sun, and

the distant thunder were warnings of the returning storm. Scenes of sylvan beauty succeeded each other under the most brilliant effects of light and shade, until an extensive prospect opened over the woodlands of Nottinghamshire. From a seat on one of the finely grown stems, with which the woodman's axe had strewn the glade (trees which once must have overshadowed the young poet as he passed), we marked in the landscape such points as were connected with his brief residence among these fair scenes. Looking over a foreground of brake and briar—rich in their early autumn tints, and glittering with rain-drops—beyond yellow hillocks where the rabbits burrowed, and, again, over green slopes, studded with twisted thorns and stag-headed oaks, the eye rested on dark masses of elm, forming the middle distance of the picture. Embedded in that woody declivity lay the Abbey of Newstead :

“perhaps a little low,  
Because the monks preferr'd a hill behind  
To shelter their devotion from the wind.”

From this point of view the building was concealed, but the further end of the lake, fronting the abbey, was visible,—the brightest object in the landscape. The “hills of Annesley, bleak and



barren," lay in dark blue tone beneath a heavy thunder-cloud, and the avenue of trees was discernible, which leads through the domain of the Chaworths to the ancient hall, with all its sad associations and regrets. Sadder still were the thoughts with which we turned to the extreme right of the landscape and discerned, through the grey mist of the falling rain, the village and tower of Hucknall, where lie the mortal remains of the pilgrim poet, brought from the far distant marshes of Missolonghi, to rest in the chancel of one of the least picturesque of our country churches.

As the storm was coming up quickly over the hills, we hastened across the park; at a sudden, turning in the road, the abbey with its lake and overhanging woods presented the view, rendered so familiar in the illustrated editions of Byron's works, or in the more faithful delineations of his own graphic pen. The gothic entrance passed, we were conducted to the library, a room in which the artist and antiquary must delight; and there cannot be a fitter place than this—the favourite apartment of Colonel Wildman, the late possessor of the abbey—to render all respect to his memory, and to express a hope, now that the approaching sale of Newstead is occupying public attention, that this sanctuary of genius may continue to be as faithfully guarded by its future occupants. With all his misfortunes Byron was happy in these two respects—first, that his ancestral home, in which he took so much pride, was rescued from ruin by becoming the property of his old friend and schoolfellow; secondly, that his poetical works, that richer heritage of his mind, were consigned to those who have most liberally published them to the world in editions, remarkable for their variety, completeness, and richness of illustration.

From the library we were led by a dark panelled corridor to the different chambers, each bearing the name of some royal or illustrious visitor. As in many other show-places, there is the usual exhibition of family pictures, cabinets and chimney-pieces of exquisite workmanship, old china and faded tapestry. But these were not the object of our visit, and in traversing the grand drawing-room, we were glad to have our thoughts called from other subjects to the remembrance of him whose genius has given a more recent charm and interest to the abbey of Newstead. Here is preserved the cup, made by the poet's desire, from the cranium of a monk; it is mounted in silver, and engraved upon it, is that brilliant anacreontic which the subject suggested to his wild imagination. As we made a hasty sketch of the cup, we could not contemplate, without revulsion, such a relic consigned to such use, nor was this feeling diminished by the gloom of that vast room, once the monks' dormitory, while the pale lightning glanced through the high windows, and the surrounding silence was made more impressive by the thunder without, and the roaring of the full-leaved elms bending to the fitful wind.

On entering the grand hall, our fancy went back to the time of the young poet, when a wolf and a bear were janitors at the door, not in the mock savageness of the sculptor's art, but alive in chained and worried ferocity. There, too, is the high, over-hanging chimney-piece, under which

such a fire was kindled on the first night of Byron's arrival at Newstead, that the safety of the abbey was endangered. A group of heedless dependents caroused in the centre of the hall; while their young lord, breaking sherds from the neglected hearth, showed the precision of his aim by scaring the bats from the timber roof, reddened from the blaze below. It is difficult to realise such a scene in the present hall, with its rich Gothic screen and music gallery, resplendent with polished oak, armour, and heraldic device. This, as well as other parts of the abbey, at the time of Byron's accession to the property, was a scene of melancholy degradation. The predecessor of the poet, rightly surnamed "The Wicked Lord Byron," had denuded the estate, destroyed the deer, felled the noblest trees, "condemned to uses vile" the most sacred and fair portions of the abbey; and at last, with difficulty, found a place in the vast building impervious to the weather, where he could close a life of the most daring profligacy. To such an inheritance did the young poet succeed.

From the hall a winding staircase leads to the abbot's lodgings, one room of which was Byron's sleeping chamber. At the desire of Colonel Wildman, every article of furniture has remained in the same state and position as left by the poet; there is a melancholy interest in such identity: in the heavy bedstead with its gilded coronets; the favourite pictures of his college at Cambridge; the portraits of his faithful valet Murray, and of gentleman Jackson the pugilist, hanging on the faded paper of the walls. Before the oriel window which lights the room, and overlooks the lake and woods, stands his writing-table, with inkstand, &c., and near it, on a dressing-table, is a toilette glass; and we doubt not that it must have occurred to many a fair visitant how often his handsome features were reflected there.

Of all the precincts of this "vast and venerable pile," the cloisters are the most interesting and picturesque. They enclose a small turf quadrangle, in the centre of which stands a Gothic fountain, surmounted with grotesque figures, "here a monster, there a saint." The slender jets falling from grim "mouths of granite made" into the circular basin beneath, break with their monotonous splash the indescribable stillness of the scene. Awaiting the passing of the storm, time was given to reflect on the many scenes and generations which have passed away since those graceful arches were first chiselled by the skilful masons of that early age, at the command of the repentant Henry, who founded Newstead, like many other abbeys in England, in expiation of the murder of a Beckett. What variety of men and events! We could imagine the abbot, with his reverend conclave, in that small but exquisitely proportioned chapter-house now used as the chapel. We could see the cowed monks, descending the staircase of the strangers' hall, to distribute alms and sustenance to the poor and wayfaring. The stones of that uneven pavement have sunk over the accumulated dust of abbot and monk, and time has left no record of them, save the marks of the brasses abstracted from their graves. And then, in later years, we could picture the desecration of that spot. Alas!



how picturesque it must have been! The cattle were littered in those holy cloisters. Lastly, we could fancy the meditative poet pacing these aisles, and "muttering his wayward fancies as he went;" or can we not imagine him, on the eve of his departure from his ancestral home, while the sound of revelling breaks on the stillness of the night, here alone, with broken and remorseful spirit, weeping over blighted hopes and aspirations; and on the morrow the

"Childe departed from his father's hall."

Passing out into the pleasure-grounds, the eye is at once attracted by the ruin of the west end of the abbey church. It is best seen from the tomb which Byron built over his dog Boat-swain. A broad expanse of light falls through the high dismantled window upon the verdant turf, all fresh and even from the recent rain and the gardener's scythe; in bright contrast to the grey masonry and the dark masses of the trees. The tracery of the window was thrown down, some thirty years since, by an earthquake; and the gaping chinks of the dog's tomb, as well as several horizontal fissures in the abbey walls, were produced by the effects of the same unusual phenomenon. The simple superstition of the neighbourhood has peopled the groves with apparitions; and certainly the trees are of the

most grotesque growth, with their gnarled branches reflected in the fountains, which they half filled with their decaying leaves. Let us pass to that noble terrace, one of the longest in England. Beneath our footsteps break the twigs with which the recent storm has strewn it, and at the further extremity a limb from the overhanging elms is thrown across its broad path. The broken hollyoaks which have laid their flowered sceptres on its grey balustrade, the ruined sundial, long since fallen a victim to that insidious Time, against which it had warned so many generations, the weather-stained vases, from which the wind has torn the flowering creepers, the half-ruined steps, on which a peacock is trailing his bright plumage in the watery sunshine,—these and many other objects enhance the melancholy beauty of the scene, and have a touching sympathy with the memory of him who will ever be sadly remembered there.

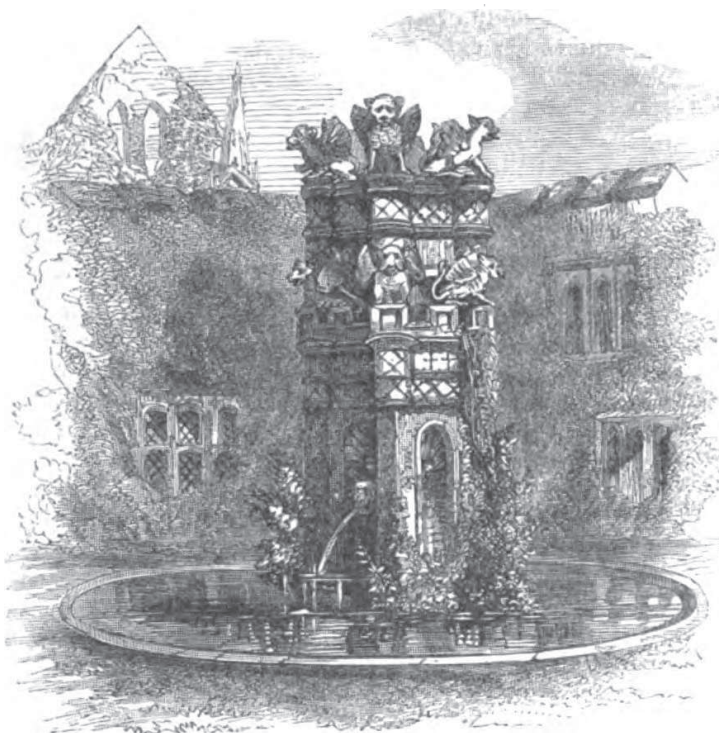
From the terrace we descended to the old fish-

pond, skirted on one side by a grove, in the recesses of which are two statues of Pan and a female Satyr, much defaced by time, and looked upon by the country people as the "old Lord's devils." The only object of real interest is a tree on which Byron, at his last visit to Newstead, engraved his name and that of his loved sister Augusta. On the other side, dark masses of yew, probably as ancient as the abbey itself, overhang the stagnant water, whose stillness is occasionally broken by the plunge of the heavy carp. It is probable that treasure and relics of the abbey lie at the bottom of that dark pond, since a brazen eagle, forming a lectern, was fished up from its depths some years ago, and its hollow pedestal was found to contain deeds and grants of the time of Edward III. and Henry VIII., together with immunities from Rome, granted to the monks of Newstead.

These latter documents caused at the time of their discovery much curiosity and scandal, as proofs of papal leniency, and the laxity of monastic morals.

It is said, that Byron delighted to people these dark shades with supernatural visitants, and give currency to all the superstitious reports connected with the abbey, by pretending to believe them. Tales of terror were circulated by him, especially that of the Goblin Friar, the Evil Genius of the Byron family, whose appearance always portended

misfortune to the lords of Newstead. But even a mind superstitiously and poetically inclined as that of Byron, could hardly have invented a tale more romantic and touching than that of the "Little White Lady"—such was the name given to a person who long haunted this spot. In her invariable dress of white, veiled, silent, and timid, she glided away at the approach of strangers into the recesses of the groves, or moving slowly along the glades in the evening twilight, returned to a lonely farm-house on the estate, where she had chosen her residence. To the country people she was an object of mysterious conjecture. Her appearance attracted the attention of Colonel and Mrs. Wildman, who became interested in her history, and showed her constant marks of kindness and liberality. Her enthusiastic admiration for the writings of Byron, and devotional interest in his fate, amounted to an infatuation, which, for nearly four years, kept her, as it were, spell-bound to the precincts of the abbey. After





Byron's death her constant companion was the noble dog which had been brought over at the same time with his master's remains from Missolonghi. Thus accompanied, she spent hours in reading and reflection, till family affairs or pecuniary difficulties compelled her suddenly to leave Newstead. On the eve of her departure she delivered to Mrs. Wildman a packet, requesting that it might not be opened till the morning. Besides MSS., written in her solitary walks about the abbey, it contained a letter explanatory of her friendless situation, and her gratitude for the attentions which she had so long received. On reading this note, Mrs. Wildman—having discovered that she had taken the road to Notting-ham—dispatched a messenger to overtake her, and entreat her return. The bearer of this kind proposal, on entering the town, reined up his horse to pass more slowly through a crowd which had formed before the principal inn. An accident had occurred, and he beheld the lifeless body of the "Little White Lady," who, owing to her extreme deafness, had been run over, and died without suffering. The romantic issue of this tale remains to be heard. Colonel Wildman took upon himself the care of her interment at Hucknall, and she was laid in death near the body of him who had, during her life, been the idol of her imagination.

Passing by the principal front of the abbey, where we could see the extent of the restorations made by its late respected owner, we left Newstead in the direction of Hucknall. For two miles we followed the ridge of high land overlooking the forest of Sherwood, and the legendary haunts of Robin Hood, till we turned from the direct road to visit the venerable Hall, the home of Mary Chaworth, "that bright morning star of Annesley," who often lured the young poet's steps over those bleak and barren hills. The lover of picturesque illustration might here crowd a redundancy of subject into one picture—an avenue of stately elms—a gate-house, with its low archway leading to a court-yard which fronts the hall—the hall itself, built at various times and in various tastes, with high gables and massive chimneys. But in connection with the youth of Byron, and his love for the heiress of Annesley, the chief points of interest are the room over the gateway, supposed to be "the antique oratory" mentioned in his poem of "The Dream," and the terrace, where he loved to loiter with her whom he declared to be "his destiny." Not far from the Hall is the scene of their parting—

"a hill, a gentle hill,  
Green and of mild declivity, the last,  
As 'twere the cape of a long ridge of such."

The morning storm had passed away as we traversed "the landscape at its base." In the soft sunshine of a Sunday afternoon we arrived at Hucknall. The church bell had summoned to evening service groups of rustic labourers, whose ruddy health contrasted with that of the pale stocking-weavers who loitered about the unromantic street of a manufacturing village. As the bell ceased, those who had assembled passed through the churchyard with its crowded grave-

stones, and beneath its humble porch, we at once moved onward to the chancel, the burial-place of Byron. There was very little of that beauty peculiar to English village churches. On the south wall was a simple slab of white marble, and the silken escutcheon which bore the Byron arms hung from its frame, faded and torn. In the vault beneath lie the remains of the poet, with those of his daughter, Lady Lovelace, "sole daughter of his house and heart." When the congregation had



quitted the church, and a fee dropped into the palm of the obsequious clerk had ensured us the privilege of being alone with our meditations.—we passed from the contemplation of the poet's career to the beauty of his works. Our memory unconsciously went back to the time when the sensitive feelings of our childhood were first moved to tears by the "Prisoner of Chillon"—how we read it in later years with scarcely less emotion by the white castle "on the blue Leman." We remembered in school-boy days how the wet half-holiday was beguiled with the odd volume of his poems,—how we envied and admired the retentive memory of our favourite chum, who could charm the wakeful hours of the Long Chamber with the recital of "Mazeppa," and long quotations from the "Corsair,"—how in after life we appreciated more and more the meaning and music of his sweet verse, till in our mature, and perhaps partial judgments, we considered "Childe Harold" as the master-piece of modern poetry. There at the humble shrine of the Pilgrim Poet did we gratefully aspire to be among those who could respond to this, his parting wish:—

"Ye who have traced the pilgrim to the shrine  
Which is his last, if in your memories dwell  
A thought which once was his—if in your hearts  
A single recollection—not in vain  
He wore his sandal shoon and sandals"

## COWPER, THE POET.

(EXTRACT FROM THE DIARY OF A LITERARY MAN.)

“SOUTHEY and Grimshaw, the rival editors of Cowper's Life and Letters, both glance at the loves of the poet and his cousin Theodosia, which, however, did not ripen into marriage; and I have heard the parental objection was the prevalence of insanity in the family. Mr. Hill, a gentleman of property in Berkshire, was Cowper's bosom friend. His widow lent the poet's letters to Dr. Johnson for publication, and she said one day to me as follows: ‘You see this enormous packet, carefully sealed. My friend Theodosia entrusted it to my care, under a solemn injunction that it should not be opened till after her death.’

“We surmised that the contents might be letters from the poet to her. Mrs. Hill survived Theodosia, and died soon after. I wonder that I never enquired of Mrs. Hill what became of the packet. Perhaps, on perusal, she destroyed it; yet not, I think, without advice. If it exists, her executors must know of it.

“I knew Theodosia and her sisters, Ladies Hesketh and Crofts, daughters of Ashley C. Clerk of the Parliament House. Theodosia was an elegant melancholic woman, and had been a beauty in print-shops.

“The editors knew nothing of this anecdote,



nor did Dr. Johnson—*Virgilium vidi tantum*. I never saw Cowper but twice. I used to visit a rich cousin who lived near Newport Pagnell, and who got an eye beat out by a cricket-ball at Eton : it was all he got there. In one of these visits I learnt that my friend, Lady Hesketh, was staying with Cowper in his cottage at Weston, three miles off, and I supplicated her for a sight of her hermit, which she contrived to manage. On calling, I found him the very model of neatness : a suit of white cloth, ditto, and a snow-white quilted nightcap. It happened to be an auspicious day, for he conversed as if he had just written John Gilpin. But what was my surprise when I heard from Lady Hesketh, the next day, that the anchorite really meant to return my visit. Accordingly he came with her, and I contrived to get him all to myself in the shrubbery, and never passed two more interesting hours.

Among other matters, I asked him how he determined on such an Herculean labour as his translation of Homer. 'Sir,' said the poet, 'I will tell you. In one of my unhappy melancholies, I thought some great and laborious work might administer a salutary medicine to my mind. Accordingly, at intervals, and by snatches, I translated several books. Lady Hesketh transcribed, and urged me to proceed ; finally, so many had been accomplished, that I determined to complete the translation.'

"On his return home, he said to Lady Hesketh, 'Prejudice is a shameful thing. From his public politics, I had formed an opinion that Mr. ——— was a caustic, sulky, acrimonious malcontent, and I have found him a gay, playful, candid, and merry companion.' This opinion was embodied with initials, in one of his published letters."

EDWARD JESSE.

## LORD MACAULAY.

---

It is a common complaint among authors and lovers of literature in Great Britain that their country does not know how to honour and reward literary eminence and service. They bid us look to France, where authors are made peers and ministers of state ; and to America, where the homage which we English pay to birth is paid to literary or forensic eminence ; and to some of the German Courts, where great authors may be found in the cabinets of sovereigns. In England, it is said, there are no honours for literature ; no rewards except its own earnings ; whereas there are no natural reasons why offices requiring intellectual ability should not be assigned as prizes in the race of literature ; and the deserts of laborious and devoted authorship are surely as good a ground for grace from the Fountain of Honour—the sovereign—as the services of eminent soldiers and seamen and lawyers, if not statesmen. In England, an author who has disclosed to the people at large the history of their country, or some kingdom of nature, or some glorious realm of imagination, may be worshipped by crowds wherever he turns, may be dear to the nation's heart while living, and mourned by all its millions



when dead ; and yet have no notice from government, may never enter a royal palace, and may die untitled, and be buried in an ordinary family grave, leaving to his descendants no trace of his greatness but the fact and its natural results. Such is the view taken by a good many persons who ought to know something of literary life and literary men.

Others are of opinion that it would be a change for the worse, and a degradation of letters, to form an arbitrary connexion between authorship and office, between literary desert and conventional honours. They look towards France and America, and believe they see that great authors are by no means ennobled by a peerage, or truly rewarded by the possession of office. They believe that to make politicians and office-holders of men of letters is to spoil two vocations for no benefit whatever. The literary peer is out of his element at court or in council ; and the student finds official business a sore burden—consuming his time and wearing out the energies he wants to devote to his own pursuit. It is no grace, these objectors say, to add a conventional, and therefore inferior, honour to the natural honour of popular homage ; and it is no kindness to a man whose life is occupied by a favourite pursuit, requiring his whole mind, to impose upon him a different kind of business which must take just so much time from that which he prefers. Either the official place is a sinecure, and its emoluments a pension under a false name, or its business, which might as well be done by another man, deprives society of good books by breaking up the leisure and singleness of aim necessary to their production.

Such is the reply to the dissatisfied. For my part, I agree in the reply : and we ought to remember that Macaulay took the same view in his review of Fanny Burney's *Diary*, expressing very plainly his disgust at the cruelty, vanity, and folly of placing her at court, as a reward for her novels, admirable in their day. The reviewer observed that Dr. Burney seems to have been as bad a father as a decently good man could be, in disregarding the natural tendencies and affections of his daughter, and that he seemed to think going to Court much the same thing as going to Heaven. So said Macaulay, wisely and truly, about a case which is only a strong example of what the dissatisfied are asking for—Macaulay himself being destined to afford a conspicuous illustration of the combination of literary and arbitrary distinction—of honours won by genius and those which are bestowed by state patronage and royal grace.

Persons who know that essay of Mrs. Barbauld on the "Inconsistency of Human Expectations," which Charles James Fox declared to be the best essay in the English language, will inevitably be reminded of it as often as they hear any discussion on the subject of giving peerages or offices to illustrious authors. As the high-souled man who prefers self-respect to wealth ought not to grudge riches to the mean dirty fellow who made himself a mean and dirty fellow for the sake of riches ; as the man of intellectual pursuits, refreshed by "a perpetual spring of fresh ideas," ought not to be

jealous of the fame and success of the man who lives in a crowd ; so it is folly and want of spirit for the man of letters, and especially the author, to covet the objects of men who breathe a different atmosphere from his own, and do a very different kind of work, to earn the rewards they seek. So teaches Mrs. Barbauld's essay ; and, in the opinion of many wise men besides Fox, her doctrine is the true one. To each man his own work and its rewards. If the work be appointed by natural genius, its natural rewards will follow, transcending all others. If the work be conventional, let it win conventional rewards. The painful spectacle is seeing the winners of the higher recompense stooping to covet the lower, or their friends dishonouring them by complaining on their behalf.

In Lord Macaulay we have a very interesting illustration of the combination of the two orders of recompense ; and it is one which we can contemplate and remark on without pain or reproach, because no sort of blame can attach to his memory on the score of infidelity to literature for the sake of ambition. Not only singularly gifted but singularly placed, his was a special case, and his honours had a double origin. The question hereafter will be,—as it is for us now,—not whether the illustrious man was lowered by his peerage and his state-offices, but whether he is not now, and will not always be, remembered for other things, when these incidents of his career drop out of sight. In an age when the rising generation of noblemen are not satisfied with being peers, but aspire to personal distinction of their own winning, as authors, statesmen, artists, or travellers, it cannot be but unreasonable to anticipate that society may forget that Macaulay was ever Secretary at War, or a peer, though his peerage is understood to have been a tribute to his literary eminence.

His case was complex, as his powers were diversified. He was descended from the noted Scotch clan which possessed the island of Lewis, the line being carried down to him through the Presbyterian church, of which his grandfather was a minister in the Highlands. The religious element was strong in his ancestry ; and hence his keen knowledge of the Puritan struggle in Great Britain and elsewhere ; and hence also, most probably, his failure in apprehending the various phases of religious belief and feeling in India, and the consequent ill-success of his labours there. In no ancestor was the religious element stronger than in his own father, the venerable Zachary Macaulay, a devout member of the Clapham church, and one of the very best of the anti-slavery band which issued from that sect. During a long life he worked diligently, suffered much, and sacrificed everything that stood in the way of his advocacy of human freedom as the right of all human beings. With him it was no work of imagination. What he saw with his own eyes in Jamaica, in his youth, induced him to go to Sierra Leone, and live there for several years, operating against the slave-trade with all his might ; and when he came home, it was to follow up the same work, which he did to his latest day. It seems as if his son had heard too much about it at an early age,



when children become easily wearied of any subject which engrosses the family attention or conversation; or rather, on going out into the world they find that the home topic is only one of a wide range, and are tempted to neglect it in proportion to the previous over-estimate. Thus it seems to have been with Thomas Babington Macaulay, who once, when he was four-and-twenty, gratified his father by an eloquent and vehement anti-slavery speech, and then turned away from the subject for ever. It may be a good thing for society that he showed no sympathy with philanthropic aims and efforts. We have men enough to carry out that tendency of our time; and some of us may think that we are riding the hobby of the age too hard, and getting our minds into nets, and injuring the independence of other people's minds and affairs. Macaulay turned his back on that phase of society, very early; and it was not long before he won away his generation from an exclusive attention to it.

His pursuits were literature and law, with a distant purpose of statesmanship. He had strong ambition; and the statesmanship was to gratify this. He must have a profession; and the law was to provide one. He had the literary faculties in rare excellence, and literature was therefore his passion at first, and his true calling and supreme glory afterwards. His oratory was literature; his conversation was literature, and if his most idolatrous admirers were wont to declare that he had early distinguished himself in every walk he could try,—in college study, as an orator, an essayist, a poet, an historian, a politician, and a lawyer, the claim might be admitted if it was understood that all this was done by treating each case in a literary method. By his college studies his marvellous memory was exercised to its full capacity, and his active but not profound or comprehensive imagination was gratified, and trained to singular flexibility. His poetry, then, and later, was no work of an imagination which had been born and fostered amidst deep thought and openness to the influences of nature; but rather a recitation of impressions derived from classical study. His speeches in parliament were historical or literary essays, and his conversation was full of every kind of material derivable from books. As to his law, the less said about it the better, except as an auxiliary to his study of history. He went to India to make laws for the people there, and the attempt was a failure. He could not have succeeded better in the administration than in the making of laws, for he had not the requisite accuracy of mind.

With all his activity of imagination, and stores of knowledge, and rapidity of utterance, he had an indolence of mind which impaired his wondrous powers, and spoiled his highest achievements. He accepted and used whatever his prodigious memory offered to his use; and thus was the greatest plagiarist of his time. If a notion struck his imagination, he adopted it, without scruple, and without testing it: hence his unsoundness in statement of cases, his misrepresentations of character (as in the notorious case of William Penn), and his daring preference of effect to truth, as in the story of the Glencoe massacre. The same

indolence probably went a long way in deterring him from a fair acknowledgment of mistake, as in the Penn case, where candour would have given him much trouble in altering his history to suit the facts of the great Quaker's real character. The same indolence manifested itself in the slovenly definitions and loose prescriptions of his Indian Code, which bears the impress of the rhetorician rather than the legislator. His brilliant historical speculations, suggestive to all, and fresh to most readers, are to be read as suggestion, and by no means as truth or philosophy. On close examination, each one is probably found wanting in the statement of some essential consideration which would modify the whole. Indolence here again hindered the necessary work of testing, which every speculation should undergo, to the extent of a man's whole faculty, before it is committed to the general minds. Macaulay enjoyed the speculation, and knew that others would enjoy it; and he did not care to inquire whether it was sound. In parliament, the same want of a sound basis was more conspicuous than in his writings; as in the instance of his speech on the Copyright question, when, in defiance at once of equity, of reason, of sympathy with the literary class, and of the plainest common sense, he assailed the rights of literary property, in a speech which was an insult to the understandings of all listeners. As a hearer said at the time, it remained to be explained what motive could be sufficient to induce a man to stultify himself as Macaulay did on that occasion. The levity with which, on the next occasion, he shifted to another ground, and hailed an opposite conclusion, was an equal mystery. Probably he spoke on both occasions from fleeting impressions.

It is impossible to avoid seeing that the heart, which is usually an attribute of genius, would have prevented both the indolence of mind and the looseness of conscience which these transactions prove only too clearly. But Macaulay lay under a disadvantage there. He heard too much of religious and benevolent sentiment at an untimely period of his life. He took refuge from weariness and satiety in these matters in literature and secular studies; and the life of sympathy was thenceforth closed to him. He was a man of a kindly nature when no special jealousy intervened; but he seemed not to need much human affection, within himself or towards himself. He never married; and he lived an intellectual life, except in as far as his ambition, and his somewhat Epicurean tendencies, were compatible with it. Hence his deficiency in the coherence of his reasoning, and in his interpretation of much of human conduct in history. The central fire which in such an intellectual constitution should have well fused the faculties, and rendered their work substantial, and its influences vital, was low and flickering. The organisation seemed to work rapidly and easily; but it was loose, and its produce, however brilliant, was superficial.

Singularly brilliant it was, however. The interest and charm of his Essays, especially, are quite out of the line of comparison with any others. While we had them as the exponent of the man, the fascination was irresistible; and we



were tempted to overlook his unsoundness just as he was himself tempted to perpetrate it,—by the brilliancy and impetuosity of his conceptions and style. When his History began to appear, we were at first more enraptured than ever: then we wished for more of the repose of the true historical method; and when, by degrees, the inaccuracies were checked, and we observed that we were deprived of references, of dates, and of all the ordinary safeguards and tests of historical narration, we were compelled to regard the work as a romance of history, or eclectic presentment of it; and we lost half our pleasure in losing all our confidence. The effect was apparent in the reception of the second instalment; so that before we were aware of the extent to which the author's health had failed, we doubted whether he would give us much more of his History. Not the less grieved are we now that it is for ever beyond our reach. No one can take up his work: no one can supply his place. The brightest genius of our time is extinguished; and his unfinished work will be the marvel of successive generations, for its pictures of character and action, its wealth of illustration, and the ingenuity and attractiveness of its speculations.

His oratory was very like his writings. His conversation was even more striking than either, because it evidenced a readiness of power scarcely believed in by those who saw how ill he succeeded in debate. The want was, not in readiness of command of his resources, but in sympathy which would enable him to meet the minds of opponents. He thought somewhat too well of himself, and much too contemptuously of antagonists, to make a successful debater.

Political life was, in fact, not the life for him. He was made for literature, and neither for law nor statesmanship. His splendid promise of thirty years ago issued in a certain amount of party service, in upholding an unpopular Whig administration, while he damaged his own position by fighting the battles of his friends through right and wrong with equal impetuosity. He was a Secretary of State for two years; but his work in the study has put that of the War Office out of sight. His peerage was bestowed when he had quitted political life; and it is therefore regarded as a royal acknowledgment of literary eminence. The case is complicated, however, by his services to successive Whig ministries; and, as it is not the habit of the present reign to honour literature, Lord Macaulay's title will probably be ascribed, in the long run, to a political origin.

The best friends of literature will, perhaps, be those who thus regard the case. They may, at all events, confidently say that he will be remembered, and celebrated in future, as Macaulay, and not as a peer of the realm. If he had left heirs, his works would have been the most honoured of his offspring, though peers of his name were to sit as legislators for centuries to come. As no one grudged his honours, let no one now misinterpret them. He was favoured, on account of his talents, with early position and independence. He had the world before him to make out a career for himself, without drawback or hindrance. He had every opportunity,—every facility for doing what

he would and could. What he did was to achieve a vast fame in literature, while substantially failing otherwise. He won intense and universal admiration; he indeed compelled it: but he did not engage much affection, nor inspire a deep interest, beyond that which always waits upon the working of rare faculties, and the achievement of a magnificent success.

Such was Macaulay. His life, its deeds and successes, rather tend to show the self-supporting and self-vindicating force of literature, than to encourage appeals to the Fountain of Honour and the treasury of recompense for the reward of its success. Macaulay would have been our most brilliant writer if he had never entered aristocratic society, or dreamed of entering either House of Parliament. And no author of any order of genius will be likely to illustrate his age and country, who aims at or desires adventitious honour, or who does not feel in the depth of his heart that literary toil is its own "exceeding great reward."

I. S.